

DAYTON

Opera



Ultimate Study Guide

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HEADLINE NEWS

Dayton Opera Education News

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ELDERLY DR. FAUST DISAPPEARS FROM HOME!

Respected philosopher and man of letters, Dr. Johann Faust disappeared from his home last night. Neighbors said that they had not seen the Doctor since he had taken to his room early yesterday morning, his mood somewhat black. In the early evening a young man was seen leaving the premises in the company of another man, clearly not the elderly Dr. Faust. No one could recall seeing either the young man or his companion enter the Doctor's home.

TOWN FAIR DISRUPTED BY MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

The town's annual fair was disrupted by a chain of bizarre events which began with a young soldier, Valentin, taking leave of his sister, Marguerite. A student of the nearby academy lightened the mood by leading a drinking song but was interrupted by a mysterious stranger who sang a vulgar hymn to greed and wickedness and then amazed and frightened the crowd by making new wine flow from old kegs by no visible means. The stranger's ill-behavior continued with his raising a lewd toast to Valentin's sister Marguerite causing Valentin to demand satisfaction and defend his sister's honor. Instead of dueling Valentin, the stranger broke his sword by some invisible, nefarious means. The soldiers and villagers then accused the stranger of being Satan and attempted to run him off with symbols of the Cross. The party then seemed to go on without further incident, but citizens remain

disturbed and unsettled by such uncanny events.

LOCAL GIRL RECEIVES GIFTS FROM UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR

Marguerite said she received an anonymous gift of jewels on her front doorstep. She says she is at a complete loss as to how they arrived, but a young man recently appeared in town with the stranger who caused so much trouble at the town fair. Authorities speculate that perhaps he is responsible for the box of jewels and urge young women in the neighborhood to practice extreme caution with regard to such gifts or the presence of the two unknown men. They seem to be taking extreme interest in Marguerite and do not seem willing to engage other townspeople in the neighborhood. Dame Martha says that she spoke with the young man's companion which gave the young man the opportunity to be alone with Marguerite. Dame Martha says she regrets this now because Marguerite's behavior has been secretive and reclusive for the last several months.

VALENTIN KILLED IN DUEL!

Marguerite's brother, Valentin was killed by the young man, suspected of seducing her. Anonymous sources name the man as Faust, although they still cannot name his mysterious companion. With his last breath, Valentin was said to curse Marguerite. Witnesses fear that his curse has unhinged her mind because she left the scene giggling madly.



synopsis

ACT I, Scene 1. Alone in his study, the aged Dr. Faust despairs that his lifelong search for a solution to the riddle of life has been in vain. Twice he raises a goblet of poison to his lips but falters when the songs of young men and women outside his window re-awaken the unfulfilled passions and desires of his youth. Cursing life and human passion, the envious philosopher calls on Satan for help. The Devil appears, and Faust tells him of his longing for youth and pleasure; Méphistophélès replies that these desires can be realized if he will forfeit his soul. Faust hesitates until the Devil conjures up a vision of a lovely maiden, Marguerite. A magic potion transforms Faust into a handsome youth, and he leaves with Méphistophélès in search of Marguerite (Duet: “A moi les plaisirs”).

ACT I, Scene 2. Soldiers and townspeople gather for a fair. A young officer, Valentin, holding a medallion from his sister Marguerite, asks his friend, the young boy Siébel, to protect the girl in his absence and then bids a touching farewell (“Avant de quitter ces lieux”). Wagner, a student, starts the revels with a lively song but is interrupted by Méphistophélès, who delivers an impudent hymn in praise of greed and gold (“Le veau d’or”). The Devil refuses a drink from Wagner and amazes the crowd by causing new wine to flow from an old keg. When he makes a brazen toast to Marguerite, Valentin draws his sword, but it shatters; the other soldiers, recognizing Satan, hold their swords like crosses before Méphistophélès (Chorus: “De l’enfer”), who cowers before them. As the crowd begins a waltz, Faust speaks to Marguerite. She demurely refuses to let him escort her home; Méphistophélès returns to lead the merrymakers in their dance.

ACT II, Scene 1. Siébel briefly visits Marguerite’s garden to leave her a bouquet of flowers (“Faites-lui mes aveux”). The romantic youth is followed by Faust and Méphistophélès, who goes in search of a gift to outshine Siébel’s; left alone, Faust hails

Marguerite’s simple home (“Salut! Demeure”). The Devil returns with a box of jewels, which he places near Siébel’s flowers. When Marguerite arrives, she sits by her spinning wheel to sing a ballad about the King of Thule (“Il était un roi de Thulé”), distractedly interrupting the verses with reflections on the stranger she has met. Discovering the flowers and box, the girl exclaims in delight as she adorns herself with jewels. (“Ah! je ris”). Méphistophélès detours a nosy middle-aged neighbor, Marthe, by flirting with her, so that Faust may complete his seduction. As Méphistophélès invokes a night full of stars, Marguerite confesses her love (Duet: “Il se fait tard!”), but nevertheless begs Faust to leave. The Devil mocks Faust’s failure, and points to Marguerite, who has reappeared at her window. As she ecstatically expresses her love for Faust, they meet and embrace. She yields to his embraces, as Méphistophélès’ taunting laughter is heard in the garden.

ACT III, Scene 2. Marguerite seeks refuge in church, only to be pursued by Méphistophélès, who curses her and torments her with threats of damnation. She collapses.

Act III, Scene 3. In the town square, Valentin and his comrades return from war, singing the glory of those slain in battle (Soldier’s Chorus: “Gloire immortelle”). The soldier questions Siébel about Marguerite but receives only evasive replies; puzzled, he enters his house. Faust, remorseful at having abandoned Marguerite, arrives with Méphistophélès, who serenades the girl with a lewd ballad (“Vous qui faites l’endormie”). Valentin, stepping forth to defend his sister’s honor, fights a duel with Faust. Méphistophélès interferes at a crucial moment, and Faust inadvertently kills Valentin. As the Devil drags Faust away, Marguerite kneels by her fatally wounded brother, who curses her with his last breath. She rises slowly and giggling madly to herself, moves through the crowd of villagers.

ACT III, Scene 3. In the prison Marguerite lies asleep, condemned to death for the murder of her illegitimate child. Faust and Méphistophélès enter, bent on spiriting her away. As the Devil keeps watch, Faust wakens Marguerite; at first the distracted girl is overjoyed to see her lover, but instead of fleeing with him she tries to recall their first days of happiness. When Méphistophélès

emerges from the shadows urging haste, Marguerite calls on the angels to save her (Trio: “Ange purs, ange radieux”), and she walks to the gallows. Méphistophélès pronounces her condemned, but as she approaches the hangman, a choir of angels proclaims her salvation.

—courtesy of Opera News



meet the composer: Charles François Gounod

“...Be a musician then, since the devil forces you to it! It is impossible to fight against something like this.”

*16-year-old Charles Gounod's
Headmaster upon hearing
a composition the boy
composed in two hours*

Gounod's mother was not enthusiastic about the prospect of her son pursuing music. The life of an artist was hard, and well she knew it. She herself was a talented musician, the widow of a painter, and she had supported her family with drawing and piano lessons since her son, Charles, was 4-years-old. In her desire to save her child from such travails, she approached his principal, begging him to convince her son that music was no career. Faced with the youth's trenchant insistence that music was his desire and fate, the headmaster demanded that he write an aria and show what he could do. Gounod did so within two hours, complete with piano accompaniment. His headmaster was impressed, and Gounod's mother, proud of his accomplishment and passionate in her love for him, capitulated.

Keeping Gounod from an artist's life would have been a Sisyphean task. His lineage was full of musicians, artists and poets. His father, François, had been born in the Louvre, where he also studied art. Though François never actually won the Prix de Rome, the judges, impressed with his gifts, nevertheless sent him to Rome to continue his studies. While given to a dreaminess that sometimes undermined his potential, François

nevertheless supported his family as an artist and taught his son to draw. Charles' mother, Victoire, was an accomplished musician of noble birth. Her family's fortunes had fallen dramatically during the French Revolution and, as a girl, she had contributed to the family's desperate finances by teaching piano. Largely self-taught, she was not content to remain so, and sought out additional instruction in Paris—a good distance from her home. Impressed with her talent, determination and hard work, her piano teacher paid for an instrument to be placed in her home so she could practice.

In 1806 François and Victoire married in Rouen and began their family. Their first child appeared in 1807; a son they named Louis Urbain. Later he would grow up to be a gifted architect. In 1818, they had Charles.

As an infant his mother sang to him as she nursed him. As a very small child, his father gave him pictures of eyes, noses and mouths to copy, and side by side the two would work at picture making. By the time he was 4-years-old, however, Charles' father was dead. Though Gounod always retained his artist's eye, music replaced

art as his mother's influence was unleavened by his father's presence.

Early on, Gounod was a precocious musician. Before he spoke, he understood the major and minor keys. He read music as readily as he read words, and his mother began to teach him more formally. His was a bright happy spirit, lively and transparent. When, at 11, he was sent to boarding school, he excelled in Latin and Greek, wrote excellent poetry and acquitted himself admirably. As a reward, his mother took him to his first opera, Rossini's *Otello*, which thrilled him. Soon after, the young Gounod saw Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which was to become the most intense operatic experience of his life.

From then on, the study of nothing moved him so much as music. Instead of taking notes in class, he wrote music. His teachers grew exasperated. He was punished. He wrote melodies again. At 16, he wrote a letter to his mother announcing his decision to pursue music. Charles would serve no other master.

Seeing no alternative, Victoire Gounod determined to help her son by getting him the best musical education that she could provide. To this end she delivered him into the hands of Anton Reicha for composition. Gounod also continued regular classes at his boarding school until 1835, when he left school for good, eager to focus exclusively on his music. In 1836, he formally entered the Conservatoire in Paris where he began to study with Halévy (who would later write the libretto for *Carmen*). Unfortunately for Gounod, Halévy was a very busy, successful composer with little time for his pupils. Consequently, Gounod learned little from him. For composition, Gounod drew a better card in Henry Berton. Berton handed Gounod a score of *The Marriage of Figaro* and bade him study it. This exhortation was to have a profound effect on Gounod who later said, "Mozart is to Palestrina and Bach what the New Testament is to the Old in the spirit of the Bible, one and indivisible."

Gounod was also to study with Jean Lesueur who encouraged Gounod to allow a little theatre into his church music; and Berlioz, who Gounod recognized as a musician of exceptional talent and ingenuity. In 1839, Gounod won the Prix de

Rome and made his way to the Eternal City to study.

In Rome, he met countless artists and musicians who were to create the artistic bouillabaisse in which Gounod steeped. Here, Fanny Mendelssohn introduced Gounod to the German school of music. She spent countless hours playing Bach, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn for him. Gounod's enthusiasm was effusive and Fanny, while she couldn't help but like him, found him a little immature.

In addition to artistic nourishment, he found his soul fed in the "outdoor cloister" which is how he characterized the elegance and classical balance of Rome. Throughout his life, Gounod was to vacillate between the Church and theatre. Always, always he longed for the contemplative life in a way that worried friends and family. His mother warned him that if he were to don a collar, his art would be smothered by the weight of an absolute authority. Still, the composer found the church attractive and even went so far as to begin the laborious three year process of becoming a priest in 1847.

Ironically, it was this commitment, freely made, which actually guided Gounod to the theatre. After five months of ecclesiastic life, the color and possibilities of drama became a siren call. Unable to resist, he left the cloister determined to conquer the opera house.

But Gounod had written nothing for the opera. He knew no librettists. His modest fame was through church music and theatre producers had little use for a church musician with no operatic connections. Soon, however, Gounod's pretty manners and handsome face garnered him such connections. He made the acquaintance of the brilliant mezzo soprano Pauline Viardot. From her, Gounod was to gain all the connections he could possibly need. Rumors abounded that Viardot had taken Gounod as lover—adding him to her already full house, which included a husband and a paramour. Though intriguing, there is no real evidence to support an affair. What is apparent is that Viardot was truly taken with Gounod's talent, and she used her influence to get an opera commissioned from him. In 1851, *Sapho* made its debut, amusing audiences and appalling critics. The critics were uncomfortable with the very thing

which pleased the audience. It was not Meyerbeer.

Hitherto, French opera had been “grand”--very grand--populated by magnificent stage effects, massive choruses, huge orchestras and overblown stories. *Sapho* was missing these gargantuan details, focusing on characters and the voice. It owed something to Gluck, but almost nothing to anyone else. It was simple, gracious and clear. True, it possessed a certain naiveté with regard to theatricality and orchestral color, but it was a start. While Parisians found refreshment in its novelty, the English were bored by its subtlety. Gounod took lessons from this useful failure to improve his subsequent efforts.

Through an advantageous marriage to the daughter of a well connected teacher, Gounod received his next commission, this time for an opera titled *Ulysse*. It was coolly received by the public. Gounod then wrote what he considered a trifle, but what he was to be most remembered for; a meditation on a theme of Bach's which was soon to be known as *Ave Maria*. This little air became a bestseller, and put Gounod on the map with the general public. His next opera, *La Nonne Sanglante*, was nevertheless a failure. All the time, though, Gounod was learning.

In 1858, Gounod found modest operatic success with a little comedy called *Le Médecin malgré lui*. Gounod had written it while he was waiting for his greatest triumph, *Faust*, to be produced. Once *Faust* made its way into the public's imagination, it became the most popular opera of the 19th century.

Gounod was never again to write an opera as influential as *Faust*. Today, his only other well-known theatrical work is *Romeo et Juliette*, generally considered inferior to *Faust*. Many critics believe that *Faust's* great success was actually “the beginning of the end” of Gounod's operatic career because while containing some of Gounod's best music, it is not for his best that the opera gained its singular popularity. Gounod subsequently misjudged the nature of his talent, which was characterized by balance, restraint and taste, not the bombast his audiences loved in *Faust*. Sadly, Gounod took the praise to heart and endeavored to write operas which included more of this bombast as well as the facile, overly

sentimental music for which he was later criticized. His operas became like frosting without the cake, and his star gradually dimmed even during his lifetime.

Gounod's true legacy is his influence on French music. Gounod served as a pivot point for French opera, restoring a sense of dramatic truth to the stage and re-establishing a French aesthetic to the art form. So, not only may we thank Gounod for the beauty and grace of *Faust*, but for the music of his protégés Bizet and Saint-Saëns, and for the direction of French music in general, epitomized by Gounod's subtlety, poise, and polish.



the making of *Faust*

“Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man? ...Here Faustus, try thy brains to gain a diety.”

Christopher Marlow,
“*The Tragical History of the
Life and Death
of Doctor Faustus*”, 1593

Gounod first became interested in setting Goethe's *Faust* after encountering Nerval's French translation. He even went so far as to set the church scene in 1849, but the subject proved monolithic and Gounod, at a loss as to how to proceed, set it aside until he met librettists Barbier and Carré in 1855. Barbier mentioned to Gounod that he would like to try his hand at an opera based on Goethe's masterwork. Gounod was amenable, of course, having cherished the desire himself. The two approached Carré, who was considerably less enamored. Carré had written a play based on the first part of Goethe's poem five years before, and it soured him on the project. He declared the plot too stale, too big, not dramatic enough (!), and on and on. Still, despite his many objections and distinct lack of enthusiasm, Carré humored his compatriots and his 1850 play *Faust et Marguerite* provided the basic structure for the opera. Carré managed to participate in the project just enough to garner a credit, but not much more than the scaffold is his. Gounod completed work in 1858 and began the rather arduous process of getting the opera produced. Theatre after theatre declined to mount the project, each objection mirroring Carré's. “Not stagey enough”; “The plot is outdated,” proclaimed producers. Eventually, Gounod found his way to Carvalho, impresario of the Théâtre Lyrique. Carvalho agreed to produce the opera, but then delayed the opening because another *Faust* was opening, so Gounod's was put off for a year.

When at last the opera made it into rehearsals, Gounod still faced problems. Madame Carvalho, the producer's wife, was cast in the role of Maguerite. While a talented soprano, Madame Carvalho saw no harm at all in altering a

composer's work to suit her. With rank disregard to good taste, the prima donna encrusted melodies--no matter the dramatic context--with ornamentation, signing each ideation with *Variante de Mme. Carvalho*. The very famous Jewel Song, (which portrays a rather unimportant incident in the Goethe) with its virtuosic vocal line is an example of how both librettist and composer bowed to the iron will of Mme. Carvalho.

Her husband was no less shy about altering shows he produced. For months Carvalho badgered his librettists and composer, dragging them in to his office night after night to wrangle about changes to the score. The result of these “epic battles” in which Barbier alone remained resolute in defending his art against the vagaries of the changeable impresario, was Barbier's inability to attend the opening because of nervous upset. The opera ended considerably shorter than originally conceived, losing several scenes and gaining a chorus number, the much admired “Soldier's Chorus”, which Gounod had actually written for an opera he never finished.

There were other irritations too. The tenor cast as Faust became ill and needed to be replaced three weeks before opening. More troubling was the meddling hand of the Minister of Fine Arts, who was concerned that the church scene might cause an international incident with the Vatican. It must be removed. Of course removing the scene effectively gelds the opera. Gounod mentioned the problem to his especial friend the papal nuncio.

No more “concerns” from the Minister of Fine Arts were forthcoming.

After such travails getting the show up, one would hope that the opening would be a tremendous success. Sadly, no. Critical opinion was mixed. “Decidedly the devil does not bring luck to M. Gounod,” read one notice. The work had its champions, however, among them Berlioz and Meyerbeer, both of whom attended the opera numerous times. The public, while not damning, was reticent to embrace the work, used as it was to the grand theatrical extravaganzas of Meyerbeer.

Slowly, *Faust* gained in popularity. While performed with spoken dialogue at its opening, Gounod later added recitatives. A performance at the Paris Opera necessitated the addition of a ballet (which he at first asked his protégé Saint Saens to write—Saint Saens managed to dissuade him), and in London the fame of the baritone demanded an aria for Valentin. The Metropolitan Opera in New York performed *Faust* for its 1883 debut. Eventually, *Faust* became the most beloved opera of the 19th century and for 50 years dominated the operatic stages of the world. If a show were failing the theatre had only to replace it with *Faust* to see box receipts pour in. Today, after falling out of fashion for frivolity, *Faust* is making a respectable showing in opera

houses. The adulation of the 19th century was, perhaps, an overreaction to the work, as was the derision that followed its fall from grace. What marks the piece great is its extraordinary beauty and theatrical effectiveness.

Historically, Gounod broke the mold of French operatic taste, taking as his models Gluck and Mozart, bringing humanity back to French opera and defining what constituted truly French music. Gounod was friend and patron to Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Massenet and Debussy and his influence is apparent in their work and all French music that followed. Gounod described his as a country of “precision, neatness and taste...the opposite of excess, pretentiousness, disproportion, long-windedness.” All that is masterful in *Faust* reflects this sentiment.



around the world in 1859

- ☐ Oregon becomes a state of the United States of America
- ☐ Charles Dickens publishes A Tale of Two Cities
- ☐ Charles Darwin publishes On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection
- ☐ Steamroller invented
- ☐ Work on the Suez Canal begins
- ☐ Bismark becomes the Prussian ambassador to St. Petersburg, Russia

did you know...?

- ☐ Gounod's *Faust* was the first opera to be produced at the Metropolitan Opera.
- ☐ Tickets for *Faust*'s premiere weren't selling well, and the producer, to drum up sales, gave away all the available tickets to the first three performances to folks living outside of Paris. He then advertised the opera as sold out. Parisians began to buzz about the new opera, and the Theatre had no further trouble with ticket sales.
- ☐ Charles Gounod's *Funeral March for a Marionette* was used as the opening and closing credits for the “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” television series

- ☐ While it is hard to say definitively, the Faust legend has been set to music no less than 32 times
- ☐ Despite the fact that *Faust* is a morality play, parents in Bennett, Oklahoma, moved to fire a music teacher who played snippets of *Faust* to her 1st and 2nd graders as part of an opera literacy unit because they felt it “glorified the devil.” The clip was performed by puppets, and was, ironically, in the school’s library.



dancing with the devil: who was Faust?

Would you sell your soul for money? Love? Fame? Knowledge? It’s an ancient question, reaching back to the Judaism of early Christianity, to the years of the written Talmud and the Kabbalah. Its theological implications fruited when early Christianity characterized human knowledge as “evil”, effectively trumping science with divine revelation. The first literary figure to sell his soul is Theophilusa Cilician, an archdeacon active in the 6th century. He barter away his immortal soul to clear himself of a false charge brought by his bishop. The tale proved so popular that it was embellished for the next two centuries, reaching its zenith of creativity with a poem by 8th century nun, Hroswitha of Ganersheim. Her descriptions of Satan’s retinue and the rituals surrounding his conjuring are particularly intriguing (and graphic ---explaining their popularity at the time).

As with many folktales, the legend of Faust has an historical antecedent: the 16th century charlatan, hedge wizard, and necromancer, Dr. Johann Faust. Throughout the early 1500’s his name appears in letters and city records, always in an unsavory context. Most assessments seem to suggest that Faust was a slick conman, a petty criminal who styled himself a magician and astronomer who communed with the spirits. It took a clergyman to seal his fame by linking his name with Beelzebub. Johann Gast, a respected Protestant pastor, claimed to have known Faust personally, and attributed to him supernatural powers acquired through a deal with the devil. That Faust chose not to dissuade the public of such an alliance speaks more to his ambition for fame than the whiff of sulfur, but, be that as it may, Dr. Faust’s reputation began to precede him. Legends popped up through Europe, culminating in Faust’s death in 1525, his neck wrung (appropriately enough) by the devil.

Eventually, these tall tales were compiled into a single volume, first published in Germany in 1587. *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* sold out as soon as it was available. Within a year, 11 pirated editions were circulating in Europe. Translations quickly followed, and by 1592, *The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus, translated into English by P.F. Gent* appeared in England. It was this book that most certainly served as the basis for Christopher Marlowe’s play, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, published posthumously in 1604 and subsequently, in the rather bowdlerized edition of 1616. It remained unrivalled until Goethe’s 19th century masterpiece.

Goethe’s great play became the source material for numerous adaptations and treatments. Goethe took inspiration from his contemporary, Gotthold Lessing, who, as an artist of the Enlightenment, viewed Faust’s thirst for and pursuit of knowledge as an admirable and noble cause. Lessing therefore altered the original story to include redemption and reconciliation for Faust. Goethe, himself a humanist, opted to take this route and rescue Faust from the deadly moralizing of the 16th century Protestant tradition. In doing so, he not only shifts the character of Faust, but that of Mephistopheles, deserting the “melancholy devil” longing for his own salvation, and creating an insolent, confident demon, secure with past, present and future, a self-described, “Spirit of Denial”. This Devil has never longed for oneness with God, never felt his own lack and therefore cannot conscience a need for it. Because Goethe’s Mephisto cannot understand the ultimate triumph of salvation that Faust unknowingly seeks, their bargain is doomed to disappoint the devil. Tragically, it takes years of depravity and the ruination of Gretchen

(Marguerite in the opera) to deprive the devil of his due.

The power and universality of Goethe's text became irresistible to artists with varying levels of talent. Fittingly, Charles Gounod, himself ever caught between the divine (a devout Catholic, he had studied for the priesthood) and the profane (the theatre became his life), was fascinated by

the Doctor seeking some undefined, unknowable happiness. Once again, the "big questions" of morality personified in Doctor Faustus, Mephistopheles and Marguerite tempt us to grapple with them within the relatively safe framework of art.

Dr. Johann Faust has gained immortality despite the devil.



behind the scenes at the opera

Meet the Production Stage Manager - Stacie Bigl

Just what does a stage manager do? In the case of Stacie Bigl, with regard to production, what doesn't she do? The most obvious aspects of her job include running rehearsals, scheduling rehearsals, calling cues, solving problems and connecting people. Listed just briefly like that it seems like a manageable amount of work, but let's look at what each of these things really entails. It will give you a greater appreciation of everyday miracle a stage manager is.

Running Rehearsals: Stacie makes sure that everyone from chorus member to conductor understands what is to be accomplished within the rehearsal period. Because we are a union house, Stacie also ensures that breaks are taken on time (not always easy, given the intensity of the rehearsal process sometimes). She also makes sure that rehearsals start and end on time. Opera is expensive and time is money. Stacie's job is crucial to guaranteeing that no one's time is wasted.

Liaison: Within a production and rehearsal process, Stacie is the hub of all the action. If you think of the entire production like a wagon wheel and all the people involved as spokes on that wheel, you will see what I mean. Stacie acts as the liaison between the director, conductor, production staff and singers. Director needs to get a message to lighting designer? Stacie typically gets it there. Problems in the theatre that need the Technical Director's attention? Stacie takes care of that too. She makes sure

everybody knows everything they need to know to get their job done.

Scheduling Rehearsals: This is much harder than you may think. In addition to making sure that the Director and Conductor have enough time to pull together the show, Stacie must pay strict attention to the rules of two different unions: the AFM, The American Federation of Musicians, which governs our orchestra members; and IATSE, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, which handles our stage hands, carpenters, etc. at the theatre. Each union has different rules governing each task performed. Break times aren't standard for both unions for instance. This can make for dizzying scheduling feats.

During Shows: But Stacie isn't just some glorified scheduling secretary. During shows is when the real excitement of her job comes. Stacie calls every cue in every show. Calling cues means calling all actors to the stage, sending them on when it is time, telling stage hands when scenery comes and goes, telling light operators when to change the lights, managing any stage machinery, ensuring that there are dressers backstage to aid in quick changes—anything that requires timing to get on stage, Stacie is responsible for getting on stage, on time. Luckily, once the singers are on, they are on their own. To give you an idea, in a fairly typical show—not too much technical stuff going on—say a *La Bohème*, there are 150 lighting cues alone in a three-hour show (every time the candle is lit or

blown out is a lighting cue—most of the time real candles aren't used on stage). In a typical three hour show, there might be as many as 1000 cues, meaning 333 cues an hour or 5 cues a minute. Of course, it is not always that hectic.

Problem Solver: In the course of a show, Stacie is the person who averts possible disaster. For instance, if the tenor rips his pants, Stacie is often the first person to know and get a costumer up to the stage to repair them, depending on how long it is 'til the tenor is next expected on stage.

During shows, Stacie has a number of tools to help her in her job. While the show is running, she stands off stage right in front of a bank of monitors. One shows what is going on onstage; one what is happening in the orchestra pit; one sometimes shows the audience in the house, and

sometimes a computer screen. She is on a headset which is connected to light operators in the light booth, sound guy, crew chiefs, assistant stage managers, at least eight or more people. She also has a score to the opera where all of those cues are written. The task of timing all those calls is a remarkable feat of musicianship and concentration.

Most remarkable of all is Stacie's ability to remain calm under pressure. One of the many important qualities of a good stage manager is an even temper and the ability to remain calm. In addition, stage managers should have excellent attention to detail, be able to multi-task, and be able to deal with wide variety of personalities and string together various agendas into a cohesive whole.

I couldn't be a stage manager—could you?

for further reading: selected bibliography

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Opera is a multi-faceted, multi-discipline art form. Opera can be used to teach literacy, as well as the arts, history, a second language, and literature. Opera is a powerful tool that can be used to explore learning, and the experience of live opera can be a powerful, life-changing experience. We hope you will use the information in this study guide to begin a journey of inquiry so that you can maximize your experience at the opera.

Opera 101 (Supporting Benchmarks for 3rd grade and beyond)

Below are simple definitions of the elements that make opera.

Opera: the plural form of the Latin word opus, which means ‘work.’ Opera is a story told primarily through singing and is usually accompanied by an orchestra.

Aria: a solo song that expands emotional information.

Recitative: chatty dialogue that moves the plot forward and is sung in between arias and ensembles.

Ensemble: when more than one singer is singing at a time. Ensembles can be the entire chorus of 50 or a duet, trio, quartet, quintet, sextet, or more.

Conductor: the leader of the orchestra and singers. Just like in a train, the conductor is keeping everything on track.

Supertitles: English translations projected above the stage just like a foreign film.

Banda: the band that plays behind the stage. Sometimes in party scenes you will hear the orchestra sounding very far away — it is really the banda playing at the very back of the stage.

Super: really called a supernumerary. Supernumeraries are like movie “extras.” They are the people who are not singing in large crowd scenes on stage. They are the silent actors who add life to large scenes.

Proscenium: the front part of the stage right below the place where supertitles are projected.

Soprano: the highest female voice – Marguerite is a soprano.

Tenor: the highest male voice – Faust is a tenor.

Baritone: the medium low male voice – Valentin is a baritone.

Mezzo-Soprano: the medium low female voice - Siebel is a mezzo

Bass: the lowest male voice—Mephistopheles is a bass.

Contralto: the lowest female voice.

grades 3-6

Grades 7-12

aesthetics & arts standards

Work sample: : After preparing with the Study Guide and attending the performance, have students write a review of the opera, noting how the music directly affects the emotional interpretation of the listener.

Work Sample: Our production of *Faust* is not a traditional one—how do the sets, costumes, puppets, jugglers, etc. work together to create an impression or a feeling. Did all of these elements enhance or distract from the story? Why or why not?

Work Sample: There are many, many stories, paintings and sculptures dealing with the subject of *Faust*. Go to the library or online (Google images has a lot of pictures, for example—don't forget to type in other character's names as well as Faust and see what you get!) and research some of these images and stories. Pick a few that are your favorites. Print them out. Why do you like them? Do they tell the same story as the opera or a different one?

historical & cultural perspectives

Work Sample: There are lots of stories and folk tales about selling one's soul to the devil. Find a few of these folk tales (a book of Grimm's Fairytales, *The Red Fairy Book*, *The Green Fairy Book*, etc. would all give good examples). See if you can figure out where the story is from (what country, what time period). How are all the stories the same? How are they different? Do you think the Era they are from makes a difference? The country?

Work Sample: Art never happens in a vacuum. What was going in Europe culturally, politically and historically that made Gounod's *Faust* so popular. It was the most popular opera in Europe throughout the 19th century. (Hint: *Faust* is about morality. What was the social climate in Europe?)

create, present, perform

Work Sample: Write a paragraph in the style of a news report. As the reporter, give your two-minute spin on the performance or elements within the production for the class. Make eye contact and speak clearly with attention to pronunciation and rate of speech.

Work Sample: Find Goethe's version of *Faust*, find some of the scenes that correspond to the scenes in the opera and do some reader's theatre. Do you think being set to music helps make the story more clear or less? Why or why not?

english, reading & writing

Work Sample: After reading the plot, and/or attending the performance, have students write a journal entry or a review of the show as a reflection.

Work Sample: After reading the plot, and/or attending the performance, have students write a journal entry or a review of the show as a reflection.

Work Sample: After reading some of the Faust folk tales, draw a picture or write a story of your own about Faust. What are the important points of the story you want to emphasize?

